

## Action Steps: The Story of B

"**The Story of B**" by Daniel Quinn is a philosophical novel that was published in 1996 and is considered a sequel to Quinn's earlier work "Ishmael." The book **challenges conventional beliefs about civilization, agriculture, and humanity's relationship** with the natural world through a philosophical narrative.

Key aspects of this main idea include:

1. Criticism of "totalitarian agriculture" and its role in causing famines and overpopulation.
2. Advocacy for a return to hunter-gatherer lifestyles and tribal social structures.
3. The concept of the "Great Remembering" - reclaiming humanity's forgotten knowledge of sustainable living from pre-agricultural times.
4. Challenging organized religions and promoting a return to animism - seeking truth in the universe rather than religious authorities.
5. The idea that humanity is heading towards extinction due to its current cultural practices, but can change its future by altering the dominant culture.
6. The notion that anyone who thinks like B is also "B" - spreading a philosophy rather than following a single leader.
7. Presenting the idea that humans don't need spiritual salvation, but rather a change in mindset and actions to ensure the survival of the species.

The book uses a fictional narrative about a priest investigating a potential Antichrist to explore these **philosophical ideas**, ultimately suggesting that **changing our cultural beliefs and practices is crucial for human survival and flourishing**. "The Story of B" is known for challenging readers to question deeply held cultural beliefs and consider alternative perspectives on human history and our place in the world.

In this Action Steps Handbook, we will provide practical steps grounded in the insights presented in the book that will **help you reconnect with your pre-agricultural roots and knowledge**.

### Step 1: Understand the "Great Forgetting"

First, we need to recognize what Quinn calls the "Great Forgetting." This is the idea that we've forgotten there was a time before agriculture when humans lived sustainably as hunter-gatherers. To reconnect, we must:

- Study human history before agriculture

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- Learn about hunter-gatherer societies that still exist today
- Question our assumptions about "progress" and "civilization"

This step is about opening your mind to a different way of thinking about human history.

### **Step 2: Recognize the Flaws in "Totalitarian Agriculture"**

Quinn argues that our current agricultural system is "totalitarian" because it tries to control nature. To move away from this, we should:

- Learn about sustainable farming practices
- Support local, small-scale farmers
- Grow some of your own food, even if it's just herbs on a windowsill

This step helps us see alternatives to our current food system.

### **Step 3: Embrace "Leaver" Thinking**

Quinn divides cultures into "Leavers" (sustainable) and "Takers" (unsustainable). To think more like a Leaver:

- Practice taking only what you need
- Consider the long-term impact of your actions on the environment
- Try to live more in harmony with natural cycles

This step is about changing your mindset to be more in tune with nature.

### **Step 4: Learn from Tribal Societies**

Quinn suggests we can learn a lot from tribal societies. To do this:

- Read anthropological studies of tribal cultures
- If possible, visit or interact with indigenous communities
- Try to understand their worldviews and practices

Remember, the goal isn't to copy them exactly, but to learn from their sustainable practices.

### **Step 5: Reconnect with Nature**

Our ancestors were deeply connected to the natural world. To rebuild this connection:

- Spend more time outdoors
- Learn to identify local plants and animals

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- Practice nature observation skills

This step helps us develop a more intimate relationship with our environment.

### Step 6: Question Cultural Stories

Quinn emphasizes how cultural stories shape our behavior. To reconnect with our roots:

- Identify the stories our culture tells about progress, success, and happiness
- Question whether these stories are truly beneficial
- Look for alternative narratives that promote sustainability

This step is about becoming more conscious of the cultural influences on our thinking.

### Step 7: Practice "Tribal" Decision Making

Quinn admires the decision-making processes of tribal societies. Try to:

- Make decisions that consider the impact on your community and environment
- Seek consensus rather than majority rule when possible
- Think about the long-term consequences of choices

This approach can help us make more sustainable decisions in our daily lives.

### Step 8: Develop New Skills

Our ancestors had a wide range of practical skills. To reconnect:

- Learn some basic survival skills like fire-making or foraging
- Practice handicrafts using natural materials
- Try preserving food without modern technology

These skills can help us feel more self-reliant and connected to our roots.

## Action Steps: The Story of B

# Reconnecting with Pre-Agricultural Roots: Personal Action Plan

## Step 1: Understand the "Great Forgetting"

**What I currently know about pre-agricultural human history:**

**Areas I want to learn more about:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**How my views on "progress" and "civilization" might be biased:**

Example

**What I currently know about pre-agricultural human history:**

Mostly learned about ancient civilizations in school, little knowledge of hunter-gatherer societies

**Areas I want to learn more about:**

1. Hunter-gatherer diets
2. Social structures in pre-agricultural societies
3. Ancient foraging techniques

**How my views on "progress" and "civilization" might be biased:**

I tend to see technology as always beneficial, need to consider downsides too

## Step 2: Recognize Flaws in "Totalitarian Agriculture"

**Current agricultural practices I want to reconsider:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

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### Sustainable alternatives I can explore:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### My plan to grow some of my own food:

Example

### Current agricultural practices I want to reconsider:

1. Buying out-of-season produce
2. Supporting large-scale monoculture farms
3. Using chemical pesticides in my garden

### Sustainable alternatives I can explore:

1. Joining a local CSA (Community Supported Agriculture)
2. Supporting polyculture farming methods
3. Learning about companion planting for pest control

### My plan to grow some of my own food:

Start with a small herb garden on my apartment balcony

## Step 3: Embrace "Leaver" Thinking

### Areas where I can practice taking only what I need:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### Ways I can consider long-term environmental impact in my decisions:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### Natural cycles I want to align more closely with:

- 1.

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2.

3.

Example

### Areas where I can practice taking only what I need:

1. Reducing food waste by planning meals better
2. Buying clothes only when necessary, not for fashion
3. Using public transportation more often to reduce fuel consumption

### Ways I can consider long-term environmental impact in my decisions:

1. Choosing products with less packaging
2. Investing in durable goods rather than disposable ones
3. Considering the carbon footprint of my vacation plans

### Natural cycles I want to align more closely with:

1. Sleep cycle - going to bed and waking up with the sun
2. Eating more seasonal, local foods
3. Adjusting activities based on weather patterns

## Step 4: Learn from Tribal Societies

### Tribal cultures I want to study:

1.

2.

3.

### Specific practices or worldviews I find intriguing:

1.

2.

3.

### How I can respectfully learn more about these cultures:

Example

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### **Tribal cultures I want to study:**

1. The San people of Southern Africa
2. Native American tribes of the Pacific Northwest
3. Aboriginal Australians

### **Specific practices or worldviews I find intriguing:**

1. Communal child-rearing practices
2. Sustainable hunting and gathering techniques
3. Storytelling traditions for passing down knowledge

### **How I can respectfully learn more about these cultures:**

Read books by anthropologists and indigenous authors, attend cultural events if available

## Step 5: Reconnect with Nature

### **Places where I can spend more time in nature:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### **Local plants and animals I want to learn to identify:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### **Nature observation skills I want to develop:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Example

### **Places where I can spend more time in nature:**

1. Local city park
2. Nearby hiking trail
3. Community garden

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### Local plants and animals I want to learn to identify:

1. Five common bird species in my area
2. Three edible wild plants
3. Local tree species

### Nature observation skills I want to develop:

1. Identifying bird calls
2. Reading weather patterns
3. Tracking animal signs

## Step 6: Question Cultural Stories

### Cultural stories that shape my behavior:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### How these stories might be limiting:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### Alternative narratives I want to explore:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Example

### Cultural stories that shape my behavior:

1. "Success means having a high-paying job and big house"
2. "Newer technology is always better"
3. "Humans are separate from nature"



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### How these stories might be limiting:

1. Prioritizing money over personal fulfillment and community
2. Overlooking simpler, more sustainable solutions
3. Disconnecting from the natural world and its rhythms

### Alternative narratives I want to explore:

1. "Success is living in harmony with nature and community"
2. "The best solution is often the simplest and most sustainable"
3. "Humans are part of nature, not separate from it"

## Step 7: Practice "Tribal" Decision Making

### Decisions where I can consider community and environmental impact:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### How I can incorporate long-term thinking into my choices:

### People I can involve in consensus-based decision making:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Example

### Decisions where I can consider community and environmental impact:

1. Choosing where to shop for groceries
2. Planning community events
3. Deciding on home energy solutions

### How I can incorporate long-term thinking into my choices:

Consider the impact of my decisions 7 generations into the future

### People I can involve in consensus-based decision making:

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1. Family members for household decisions
2. Neighbors for community garden planning
3. Coworkers for office sustainability initiatives

## Step 8: Develop New Skills

Survival skills I want to learn:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Handicrafts using natural materials I'd like to try:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Food preservation techniques to explore:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Example

**Survival skills I want to learn:**

1. Basic fire-making without matches
2. Identifying and purifying water sources
3. Building a simple shelter

**Handicrafts using natural materials I'd like to try:**

1. Basket weaving with local grasses
2. Making natural dyes from plants
3. Carving wooden utensils

**Food preservation techniques to explore:**

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1. Fermentation (e.g., making sauerkraut)
2. Sun-drying fruits and herbs
3. Canning seasonal vegetables